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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, December 29, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FURTHER NOTES FOR FOOD-SHOPPERS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

--ooOoo--

Tips for the holiday food-shopper -- that's the news for today. Our notes on supplies and prices of seasonal foods have just come in.

First, about the fresh vegetables on the market. Early in December fall and winter vegetables in Florida were severely damaged by freezing weather. The vegetables that suffered the most were snap beans, green peppers, eggplant, and tomatoes. So marketings of these crops from Florida will probably be smaller and will continue small for several weeks until the crops in the parts of the country producing later in the winter start going to market. Since Florida is the major source of bean and pepper supplies this month, the prices of these two vegetables will go up temporarily. But the Florida freeze should not affect the price of fresh tomatoes since most tomatoes in the market this month come in from Cuba and Mexico.

As for canned vegetables, their prices in the grocery stores or retail markets don't seem to have reflected fully the large drop in wholesale price that occurred this fall and winter. Our total supplies of canned vegetables this year are the largest on record and from 15 to 20 percent larger than a year ago. And wholesale prices of standard canned corn, peas and green beans in November were from a cent and a half to 2 cents on a No. 2-size can less than last November. However, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the average retail prices of corn and green beans in the United States on November 16 were only a half a cent on a No. 2-size can less than a year ago. And canned peas were retailing at about the same price as in November 1936.

Here's some special news about spinach and beets. Texas spinach and beets are now starting to move to market. About a half of the annual commercial production of each of these crops comes from Texas. Spinach shipments from Texas generally are heavy from December to March. But heavy shipments of beets continue until May. Beet acreage in Texas is one-quarter larger than last year's average size acreage.

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Ordinarily this is the time of year to start talking about strawberry shortcake again. But because of the freeze in Florida, strawberry supplies will probably be very small until well into January. The first strawberries generally come from Florida which is practically the sole source of supply until mid-March. Shipments begin in December but do not become heavy until March. The recent freeze is expected to cut down Florida supplies and marketings. Also not so many Florida acres were planted to strawberries this year as last.

Now about potatoes, sweetpotatoes, and onions. These three vegetables come on the market during the winter months mostly from storage holdings of the late crop. Because of large production of potatoes and sweetpotatoes this year, the prices of these vegetables probably will not go up as much as usual during the next few months -- will be lower than a year ago. But onion prices will probably advance seasonally and will be higher than a year ago.

The home marketer may be glad to know that butter prices have reached their season's peak and that they will probably go down more than usual from now until the yearly low point in June. But you probably will not notice any substantial changes until the new year. And the average price of butter during the first half of 1938 won't be very different from the price during the first half of 1937. During December the cold storage holdings of butter have been a quarter less than a year ago.

As for eggs, they will probably go down in price until they reach their low point in April or May. But temporary price increases may occur now and then during the winter, as they often do. Very cold weather often checks production increases and also blocks deliveries of eggs. The recent great difference between top grade and average grade egg prices has narrowed considerably but price reduction from a year ago still is most marked in average grade eggs. Supplies of storage eggs are still a good deal larger than a year ago. On December first holdings of eggs in storage were more than fifty percent larger than last year.

Now a last bit of news about apples. Apple prices probably will go up less than usual until the new crop is ready next summer. From now on the apples on the market come from cold storage and common storage. And cold storage holdings on December first were the largest on record. Most of the increase was eastern apples.

So this is a winter to put apple dishes on your menus. If you haven't enough recipes for apple dishes of your own, you are welcome to the new apple recipe folder published this fall by the Department of Agriculture. If you want a copy, just write to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C., and ask for "Apple Recipes."

Which reminds me of some lines written by Bob Adams --

"To eat each day a juicy pome
Will keep the doctor from your home.
Instead of pills of varied size
I'm eating Winesaps, Yorks, and Spies."

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